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August Merger is on Cards for Dublin IT Colleges.

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August merger is on cards for Dublin IT colleges



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A merger of DIT and two other institutes of technology in Dublin will happen in August, if the necessary legislation is in place before the summer.

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The link-up between DIT and the institutes in Tallaght and Blanchardstown will pave the way for the creation of Ireland's first technological university.

The three colleges formed an alliance four years ago to pursue university status, and the merger will be the first tangible evidence of the groundbreaking change ahead.

If all goes according to plan, the Dublin partnership will become a technological university in 2016.

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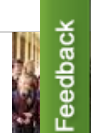
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But legislation has to be in place for a merger to happen, and a merger is a prerequisite to an application for designation as a technological university.

There is concern that the Technological Universities Bill, which was due for publication last year, has slipped down the Government's agenda.

However, Education Minister Jan O'Sullivan told the Irish Independent that she hoped to publish it in March and to have it enacted in the summer.

DIT chairman, Dr Tom Collins, who is also chair of the governing authority of IT Blanchardstown, told the Irish Independent that "if the legislation is passed in the first half of the year, August is our target date for the merger".

The three institutes account for about 45pc of first year third-level students in all Dublin higher education colleges, and together will create a formidable force.

As well as honours degrees, institutes of technology also provide a wide range of courses at what is known as Level 6 and Level 7 (higher certificates and ordinary degrees).

The creation of the new institution is set to coincide with the consolidation of DIT on its Grangegorman campus, covering 73 acres in Dublin's north inner city, in September 2017, complete with its own stop on the new Luas line. DIT, which started the move to Grangegorman last September, is currently dotted around several locations.

While Grangegorman will be the mother ship, the IT Blanchardstown and IT Tallaght campuses will also continue in operation.

After the merger, the next challenge will be the creation of a single governance structure, which will require much consultation between the colleges, and with unions.

A number of multi-campus technological universities was recommended in the Hunt Report, following a review of how Ireland's higher education landscape was equipped to meet future needs.

Initially, there was much talk that a technological university of the south east, bringing together the institutes in Waterford and Carlow, would be the first out of the blocks.

However, the DIT-led alliance is the front-runner, while another in Munster, involving Cork Institute of Technology and IT Tralee, has also been cleared to pursue university status, after an evaluation by an independent panel deemed it could meet the necessary criteria.

Ms O'Sullivan is awaiting a report from former Higher Education Authority (HEA) chairman, Michael Kelly, whom she appointed to get derailed talks between Waterford and Carlow back on track.

Irish Independent



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